

Kentucky's new testing system shows most JCPS schools 'need improvement'

Scores in state's more rigorous testing system released

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Written by

Chris Kenning

The Courier-Journal

Kentucky's new statewide tests delivered a sobering assessment of academic achievement among Jefferson County's public schools — with 80 percent categorized as “needs improvement.”

Results from the more demanding accountability system, released today, found that only 28 of the district's 136 tested schools were proficient or distinguished, based on a combination of their students' academic scores, growth, achievement gaps, college readiness and graduation rates.

Students' individual test results will be released in about a month.

As district officials had predicted, the more rigorous definitions of academic proficiency resulted in lower proficiency rates in reading and math at most schools — including some that had scored well under the state's old testing system.

“We have a mountain to climb,” Superintendent Donna Hargens acknowledged. “But nobody is shying away from the challenge, and we have a plan to get there. You cannot lower expectations.”

Districtwide, about 42 percent of JCPS elementary students, 38 percent of middle school students and 51 percent of high school students scored proficient or better in reading. Last year's rates — under less rigorous definitions for proficiency — were 65 percent, 63 percent and 66 percent, respectively.

Math proficiency scores also were lower, ranging from 33 to 46 percent of students, depending on the level,

compared with 46 to 63 percent proficiency last year. However, officials cautioned against comparing this year's scores directly with past years, since the testing standards have changed.

The results also showed that JCPS had a 2011 graduation rate of 68 percent at its high schools — 10 percentage points behind the state average — and the district overall was ranked in the state's 23rd percentile.

It was labeled as needing to improve.

“We're not where we should be. We have work to do,” school board chairwoman Diane Porter said. “I think there will be concerns ... but if that helps us get better, that's OK.”

While some principals cringed at the results and officials braced for criticism, district leaders said they expected a grimmer picture and had worked to prepare parents and the community by sending mailers and creating a website explaining the new system.

And they stressed that the result didn't mean that achievement declined. Rather, they said, it was simply a testament to more demanding standards that ultimately would produce better-educated students who can attend college without having to take remedial coursework.

“In the past, students took a driver's test. Now they're taking a flight test. It has such a higher level of rigor, but that's good,” said Dewey Hensley, the district's chief academic officer.

Hensley said the district's improvement plan includes training teachers in better instructional strategies, and adding new interventions for struggling students, including “student response teams.” There is more teacher collaboration to keep students on track, and reading and math software available through neighborhood groups and churches to extend learning time after school.

The district has also added assistant principals at elementary schools and resource teachers in others to improve instruction.

The new testing results marked the first release under the “Unbridled Learning” accountability system, which replaced the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, or CATS, after the Kentucky General Assembly in 2009 mandated a new system with more rigorous academic standards.

As part of that change, Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core Standards, a new national curriculum that seeks to teach concepts more deeply and is better aligned with college expectations.

In some cases, those expectations were four years beyond what high school seniors were required to master.

The new standards in reading and math were first taught last school year, and Kentucky was the first to test them last spring. Standards for other subjects are still being developed.

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Under the new system, schools received an overall score from 1 to 100. Overall, the district scored 50.8, compared to a 55 state average.

Jefferson County's college and career readiness rate rose to 45 percent — up from 36 percent last year but still below the statewide rate of 47 percent. Among individual high schools, the rate varied from as low as 11 percent at Valley High to 91 percent at duPont Manual High, a selective admissions school.

Student proficiency percentages also varied widely, ranging among middle schools, for example, from as low as 13 percent in reading at Frost Middle to as high as 78 percent at Brown.

Graduation rates among high schools ranged from 92.5 percent at Manual High to 40 percent at Iroquois High.

The new system also named 18 priority schools — formerly known as “persistently low achieving” schools — which will continue to undergo reform efforts. No new schools were named this year because the test is new.

In addition, the state identified 57 “focus schools” that must boost graduation rates or close gaps between overall proficiency rates and the scores of low-income, minority, disabled or limited-English students — defined as “gap” students.

One of them was Ballard High, where about 65 percent of students were proficient in reading, compared with just 45 percent of gap students. Crosby Middle was also deemed proficient but made a focus school because of its scores among special education students, said principal Michael Kelly.

“We really need to focus on the achievement gap,” Hensley said.

In addition, schools were ranked by percentiles, showing where they stood among schools with comparative grade levels around the state. Schools falling below the 70th percentile were classified as needing improvement. Those with higher rankings were either proficient or distinguished.

Fifteen JCPS schools ranked among the 90th percentile or better, including top performers Greathouse/Shryock Elementary, Brown Middle and Manual High — all of which have selective admission.

But 40 schools ranked in the 10th percentile or lower, with Jacob Elementary, Frost Middle and the Academy @ Shawnee in the 1st percentile, which is at the bottom.

That was disappointing news for Shawnee, which has long struggled with a large number of poor and transient students. Under the old system, it won praise last year for raising the percentage of students scoring proficient or better from 23 percent to 45 percent in reading and from 5 percent to 25 percent in math.

But under the new system, Shawnee's reading proficiency stands at 21 percent and 11 percent in math. It posted a graduation rate of 47 percent.

“We made phenomenal gains last year, and thought we'd figured out the system,” said principal Keith Look.

Look said his staff would pick apart the data and retool, but he still believes Shawnee's turnaround effort is beginning to work. He cited better attendance rates and improvements such as having 85 percent of graduates last year go into post-secondary education, job training or the military.

Western High, another persistently low performing school, also saw large gains last year wiped out as it ranked in the 3rd percentile of state high schools. Principal David Mike said he'll present teachers Monday with a new plan centered on the new standards.

He said he is prepared for some parents to ask why their children got lower proficiency rankings than last year, but added that “I hope I do get some flak, because I want them to come in and get engaged.”

The new system does give schools some credit for how much they move students ahead in a year. Under the old system, principals complained that they could work hard to make up deficits but get no credit if they missed the goals. Now those gains are factored into their overall score.

Wilt Elementary principal Kimberly Kent said she was pleased that her school's scores on growth and other academic factors landed Wilt in the 73rd percentile among state elementary schools — earning it a proficient rating. Still, only 42 percent of Wilt students were proficient in reading, compared with 76 percent last year under the old system.

“Kids haven't fallen behind; the standards have gotten tougher and the bar higher to hit those targets,” she said.

Brent McKim, president of the Jefferson County Teachers Association, said he worries that the higher bar comes amid years of state funding reductions for such things as books, supplies and family resource centers.

But still, “we're going to do everything we know to do to keep improving — that's why we got into teaching,” he said.

Oldham is among top districts; Bullitt encouraged by its rise

Former in highest 4%; latter breaks top half

12:39 AM, Nov 2, 2012 |

Written by

Emily Hagedorn and

Patrick T. Sullivan

Oldham County Schools officials said they're pleased but not surprised about their test results, which ranked them among the top districts in the state.

Meanwhile, Bullitt County Public Schools jumped into the the top 50 percent of school districts in the state, and officials say the district plans to keep climbing in the rankings.

"We've broken the top half, and that's big for us," said Superintendent Keith Davis, noting that the district ranked 137 out of 174 school Kentucky districts five years ago. "It's only going to get better."

Bullitt received a score of 55.4 out of 100, which put it in the top 49 percent of districts in the state. Eight schools — seven of which were elementary schools — out of Bullitt's 21 schools were classified as "proficient," which means they rank in the top 30 percent of schools in their respective grade levels.

As Davis had previously predicted, the district does not have any "priority" schools — identified as persistently low-achieving — but has five "focus schools" that have graduation rates below 60 percent or have low test scores among typically underachieving populations, which include low-income, minority, disabled or limited-English students.

Two of Bullitt's three high schools are focus schools, but Davis said they will improve with time. Students at Bullitt Central and North Bullitt high schools did not benefit from the district's recent overhaul of its elementary and middle school curriculums, Davis said, but students entering high school in the coming years will be better prepared.

"We've started catching kids at the time they fail," Davis said.

Oldham received a score of 66.3, putting it in the top 4 percent of districts in the state.

"This confirms we're on the right track," said Superintendent Will Wells.

Four Oldham schools were designated as "schools of distinction," which meant they were in the top 5 percent statewide. These included Goshen Elementary at Hillcrest.

But Oldham can get better. Six of its 17 schools were designated as needing improvement, which meant they were not in the top 30 percent. And one school, South Oldham High, was designated a "focus school." Officials said writing scores among students with disabilities were low and put the school in this category.

Overall, though, South Oldham was classified as "distinguished," in the top 4 percent of schools statewide.

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Challenges seen as Kentucky's test scores drop as expected

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Kentucky's higher academic standards took an expected toll on statewide reading and math proficiency rates when the state released its first results under its new "Unbridled Learning" testing system Friday.

State data showed that 48 percent of elementary students, 47 percent of middle-schoolers and 52 percent of high school students scored proficient or better in reading. By contrast, the rates last year were 76, 70 and 66 percent, respectively.

Math proficiency came in at 40 percent at the elementary school level, 41 percent at middle schools and 40 percent at high schools, figures that were also lower than last year, according to the Kentucky Department of Education data.

State Education Commissioner Terry Holliday said the results were expected, given that the new standards in math and reading raised the bar for academic proficiency. In fact, he said, the new results weren't as low as some had predicted.

"I think we came out a little better than expected," he said. "But we've got a lot of work to do. ... I think our kids and teachers will rise to this challenge."

Achievement gaps among low-income, minority, limited-English and disabled students, whose scores lagged behind their peers, continued to persist.

Statewide, 397 schools were classified as proficient or distinguished.

But 69 percent of the state's 1,296 schools fell into the "needs improvement" category, which means they ranked below the 70th percentile among schools statewide, based on factors such as achievement, growth, achievement gaps, graduation rates and college readiness.

Among those, the state classified 284 as "focus schools," requiring them to close achievement gaps and raise graduation rates.

"Those schools will have to revise their improvement plan, and we'll be monitoring them," Holliday said, also noting that 41 "priority schools," formerly called persistently low-performing schools, will continue to get a much higher level of attention and help.

In a new points system where schools score between 1 and 100 based on achievement, growth, gaps, college and career readiness and graduation rates, state schools averaged 55.2.

Kentucky posted a 78 percent graduation rate. In addition, 47 percent of the state's 42,116 students were deemed college- or career-ready, up from 34 percent in 2010.

Holliday plans to visit a number of high-performing districts, including Boyle County, which he said ranked in the 95th percentile despite having high rates of family poverty.

"I'll be visiting the highest-performing districts to find out what they're doing, sharing with others," he said.

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Q&A: What has changed with Kentucky's new test system?

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Written by

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The Courier-Journal

This year's student test scores mark a new era of state testing that began last spring when roughly 500,000 Kentucky students in grades three through 12 took tests in reading, math, science, social studies and writing.

Here are some questions and answers about the new testing system and what it means for schools and students:

QUESTION: What's new about this year's test scores?

ANSWER: For the first time, Kentucky will report data for the new tests — dubbed the Unbridled Learning accountability model.

Q: Why is there a new system?

A: Senate Bill 1, enacted in 2009 by the state legislature, eliminated the old Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, and called for a new testing and measurement system, plus new academic standards in core subjects. Kentucky adopted the Common Core Standards in reading and math in 2010, with students first tested on them last spring.

Q: What are Common Core Standards?

A: These standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be challenging and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that students need for success in college and careers

Q: What happened to No Child Left Behind?

A: Since the federal No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2001, schools and districts received two

"scores" — one for CATS and one for NCLB.

In September 2011, the U.S. Department of Education announced that states could apply for a waiver from No Child Left Behind and develop their own accountability standards. Kentucky was granted a waiver, which means public schools and districts now receive just one score.

Q: What happened to AYP?

A: AYP, or adequate yearly progress, was the measure used under No Child Left Behind to determine whether schools were meeting academic standards. Schools that made AYP weren't subject to consequences such as allowing students to transfer to better-performing schools or school overhauls. In the new system, each school and district will instead have an "annual measurable objective" (AMO) that is based on a 100-point scale. Because this is the first year of the test, schools and districts won't have an AMO until next year.

Q: Can the new test scores and accountability measures be compared to previous years' tests?

A: No. Kentucky adopted new standards in reading and math, and the tests for those subjects cover different items and are more challenging. The accountability labels are also different from those in the past.

Q: How can I get a copy of test scores for my child or his school?

A: The Courier-Journal has posted the results for every school in every district at www.courier-journal.com/schoolresults. Schools

will mail individual student results to parents by the end of November. Parents may also go to their child's school and request copies of the results.

Q: What do these scores mean for my child?

A: Unbridled Learning is designed to judge individual schools, not individual students. However, the results are designed to let a parent know if his or her child is ready for college or career as early as third grade. Parents may use these results to compare their child's progress against the school's. They can also use the results as one indicator — along with class work, other test scores and teacher and home observations — of their child's progress.

Q: Are there specific results I should pay particular attention to as a parent?

A: Officials say parents should look at how their child scored, but also at how the district and state and other schools scored. Because this is a new test and the standards are higher than they have been, it is likely that some children who previously scored proficient on state tests will score lower this year. Officials are urging parents not to panic and that the results will get better.

Q: How can I help my child's school do better?

A: Ask your child's teacher or principal what efforts the school has undertaken to improve. Ask what you can do to help the school reach its goals. That may include helping at the school or doing activities at home with your child.

Fayette test scores vary widely by school; district ranks 54th of 174 statewide

By Jim Warren — jwarren@herald-leader.com
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Fayette County Public Schools recorded both highs and lows on Kentucky's new statewide student test, with two schools ranked in the state's top 10 and others trailing well down the list.

The district as a whole slipped into the "needs improvement" category in the results released at 12:01 a.m. Friday.

The Fayette district was only one-tenth of a point short of making "proficient" level in the complex new scoring system. The system's design automatically ensured that 69 percent of Kentucky schools and districts would end up in the "needs improvement" classification.

Among individual Lexington schools, Veterans Park Elementary ranked fifth statewide among elementary schools. The School for the Creative and Performing Arts was the second-ranked middle school in Kentucky.

Nine Fayette schools achieved "proficient" status. Seven others reached "distinguished" level and also were named "highest performing schools." Six Fayette schools designated as distinguished were also honored as "schools of distinction," the highest accolade a school can receive in the new scoring system.

On the down side, 20 Fayette schools were designated as "focus schools" as a result of low "gap" scores on the test indicating that some of their student subgroups — minority, low-income or special needs children — underperformed compared to peers statewide.

"Overall, our district did very well. ... We feel very good about where our schools are as they move forward," Superintendent Tom Shelton said. "But having 20 schools in the focus school category clearly indicates that we still have issues in the achievement gap areas. Those are areas in particular that we want to highlight and work on."

Fayette County ranked 54th out of Kentucky's 174 public school districts on the new K-PREP test, which students took for the first time last spring.

Elsewhere in Central and Eastern Kentucky, Boyle County finished in the top 10 of school districts statewide. Also making the top 10 were Pikeville Independent Schools, Science Hill Independent Schools and Corbin Independent Schools.

Boyle Superintendent Mike LaFavers said he was particularly pleased with his district's performance, given its student make-up. He noted that many high-performing districts are in affluent areas.

"Half of our kids live in poverty, one out of seven has a learning disability," LaFavers said. "We're a regular, Joe Bag-of-Doughnuts school district. We're probably only one of about three in the top 10 that look that way. That's the thing we're most proud of."

This year's test results mark a major change for Kentucky schools. The test is entirely new; it is tied to new, tougher standards in math and English; and scores can't be compared with those from previous years. Because of that, many school districts have been rushing to get out information over the past few days explaining the new system.

Nevertheless, Jessamine County School Superintendent Lu Young said she thinks the new scoring system will provide valuable information for both educators and parents.

"There are some peculiarities ... but it does seem to work," Young said. "It's certainly data rich, and much more multi-faceted than No Child Left Behind was."

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"My only fear is that parents will just focus in on the percentile rankings or the single score. I'm hopeful that we can begin to show them that there's a lot more than just one piece of information ... information about their school and ways they can help support their school."

One of the "peculiarities" of the new system is that a school can be designated "proficient" or "distinguished" based on its performance, yet still be listed as a "focus school" because of a low "gap" score.

That happened to East Jessamine High School and to Beaumont Middle School in Lexington. "We're kind of both top and bottom," Beaumont Principal Kate McAnelly said. "It's potentially confusing because it's two totally different labels."

Beaumont was the state's 11th highest middle school. But McAnelly said Beaumont's gap score was lower than expected because of reading results among its limited-English-proficient students. Many of them have been in the country only a year or two, she noted.

That's where we have work to do," she said.

Veterans Park Elementary Principal Amy McVey said her school built on previous success to rank fifth in the state on the new test.

"We just felt like our staff really focused on the new standards and doing what was right for kids," she said. "We believe that all children can achieve at high levels, and we don't have any excuses. It paid off.

"At the other end of the scale was Lexington's Booker T. Washington Academy, which had a total score of 39.2 out of 100 and ranked 714th among Kentucky elementary schools.

"Obviously we're very disappointed," Principal Wendy Brown said. "We're looking at the data individually by student and by classroom. When we did that we saw a lot of the great things. So, we're going to be working with the teachers who did the great things to replicate that in the future.

"Shelton said there had been "a lot of apprehension" with the new scoring system.

"We're not making any excuses," he said. "But this will give us a good baseline of data that will help us set our targets from here forward." Lexington schools honored as "schools of distinction" were Glendover, Picadome, Rosa Parks and Veterans Park elementary schools, plus Morton and SCAPA middle schools.

Ashland, Athens-Chilesburg, Cassidy, Maxwell, Meadowthorpe and Stonewall elementary schools, plus Jessie Clark Middle School, were named "highest performing schools," which actually is a lower designation than "school of distinction."

Designated as "proficient schools" were Clays Mill, Julius Marks, Squires and Wellington elementaries; Edythe J. Hayes Middle School, and Henry Clay, Lafayette, Bates Creek and Paul Laurence Dunbar high schools.

However, Henry Clay, Lafayette, Dunbar and Bates Creek also were classified as focus schools. Bryan Station High was classified as a priority school based on its being in the lowest 5 percent of schools in the state.

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Kentucky releases new school test scores — and many more districts find themselves lagging

By Linda B. Blackford — lblackford@herald-leader.com

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Kentucky school districts are adjusting to a new testing system that ranks almost 70 percent of the state's schools in the lowest category: "needs improvement."

"The results, released at 12:01 a.m. Friday, may come as a shock to school districts that had generally ranked higher in previous tests. But the system's design automatically ensured that 69 percent of schools and districts would end up in the "needs improvement" classification.

And state educators and testing experts caution parents and teachers not to panic, that the new test of national higher standards with more components — such as graduation rates and college and career readiness — meant more schools were bound to find the test harder going.

The other 31 percent of schools and districts are designated as either "proficient" or "distinguished."

"I'm still having to adjust my vocabulary," said Anthony Orr, superintendent of Nelson County schools and a former principal of Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Lexington.

"In some sense, any of us would say we need improvement," Orr said. For the past nine months, he and school employees have been trying to prepare the community by pointing out higher standards in math and reading, plus many more components. (In addition, the highest score has gone from 140 to 100.) For example, at the elementary level, schools are judged on actual test scores, along with the performance of minority, special education and low-income students. Around the state, 31 schools were proficient or distinguished but were also "focus" schools, meaning those groups had not scored well enough.

The test also looked at the growth of every academic level. A fourth-grader who reads at the fifth-grade level will still have to make progress to earn points, just as someone who reads below grade level will have to improve.

This has tripped up some schools. In Grayson County, Superintendent Barry Anderson said one school that usually scored the highest on statewide tests scored the lowest this time around because growth rates were too low. It's confusing for teachers even as they try to improve, he said.

"That school didn't get dumb in one day that they took the test," Anderson said. "I'm conflicted about this. Our public will be conflicted.

"At the middle and high school level, schools will see the most changes because of including testing from the ACT test. The statewide percentage of students who are college or career-ready is 47.2 percent, which is an increase from last year of 38 percent.

High schools are also judged on growth and graduation rates. "It is multi-measured, but I think that's somewhat as a result of the attempt to meet the expectations of parents and teachers that the score on a test is not the only thing schools should be measured by," said Wilson Sears, director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents. "It is complicated, and we understand that, but I also think it is more comprehensive than it was before.

"The larger issue might be test fatigue. In the past 20 years, Kentucky's teachers and students have toiled over the KIRIS test, which under political pressure became the CATS test. Around 2007, that changed to CATS II, which segued into the KCCT test.

MORE

The new test is called Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress — K-PREP for short — the fifth high-stakes, high-pressure system in two decades. When parents are told each time that this test is the best one, confidence can wane, school officials said.

Add to that the fact that schools have been placed on a bell curve, which means that roughly two-thirds of them have to fall into the "needs improvement category," even though their score might be very close to one deemed "proficient."

Roger Marcum, former superintendent of Marion County and a member of the Kentucky Board of Education, says he understands this but hopes parents will still pay attention.

"We are looking at more things than we ever have before," he said. In addition, Marcum said, as the scores roll out and get more analysis, the state school board is willing to tweak pieces of the testing system.

Education consultant Susan Weston said the issue becomes more confused because standards got lowered in the transitions between testing systems, particularly between 2007 and 2009. "The current testing system has clearer standards for reading, writing and mathematics, and it has more demanding scoring for those subjects," she said. "Those are improvements over all our past tests. It's likely the best move we could have made this year.

"On the extreme ends of the testing system, the results did not stray far from past years. The top districts included mostly small, independent districts with wealthier student bodies, such as Anchorage, Fort Thomas and Murray. The lower end included the far reaches of the state, such as Fulton, Magoffin and Clay counties, which have high numbers of low-income students.

Three schools, The Academy @ Shawnee, Frost Middle in Jefferson County and Chavies Elementary in Perry County, scored only in the high 20s; the highest score in the state, 91.6, belonged to Anchorage's middle school.

But it's the vast middle that caught up most districts, including 328 schools statewide that scored below 50 points out of 100. Kentucky is the first state in the country to adopt the national Common Core Standards, and to test on them.

"The world has changed," said Commissioner Terry Holliday. "This is the first time all the states have come together and said, 'Here are the standards to make us more competitive.'"

Staff writer Linda J. Johnson contributed to this story. Linda B. Blackford: (859) 231-1359; Twitter: @lbblackford

Neihof on test scores: 'We are challenged'

4 schools 'Proficient' but readiness is good

By TODD MARTIN
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The Next-Generation Learners, the first component of the state's new educational accountability system shows that the state, by its own measures, Needs Improvement.

Begun for the 2011-12 school year, the evaluation combines standardized and end-of-year test results in a complex formula for evaluating each school in the state, and eventually it will include accountability measures for teachers and administration, as well.

Results for Shelby County Public Schools show much the same as the state's: improvement is still needed.

However, there are some bright spots, including the impressive results from both the county's schools in regards to getting students college and career ready.

"The bottom line is we are disappointed...We are challenged," Superintendent James Neihof said in a release Thursday. "My nature is to be competitive, so I believe we are capable of better than these scores indicate."

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■ Schools

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Shelby County showed rankings in 12 schools — Collins and Shelby County high schools' eighth-grade classes were each counted as their own middle schools because of the way the laws are written — and only four were marked as proficient.

The schools scoring proficient were:

- Simpsonville Elementary, 76th percentile.
- Painted Stone Elementary, 72nd.
- Wright Elementary, 71st.
- West Middle, 70th.

The other eight schools fell into the Needs Improvement category, the bottom of the three categories: Distinguished, Proficient and Needs Improvement. The Proficient classification fell between the 89th and 70th percentiles, Distinguished at the 90th and up and Needs Improvement from the 69th and below.

Clear Creek Elementary, 65th percentile, and Collins High School, 66th, were the only other schools above 60.

Statewide there were 136 schools that earned Distinguished from among the 1,296 that were measured.

Simpsonville Principal Jill Tingle said she was very pleased with her schools' results and emphasized the teachers' abilities to make adjustments to their students' needs. "Thinking Strategies was a huge component to our success," she said in the release. "There was a common language throughout the building among students during classroom learning."

Neihof commended the students and staff at Simpsonville and the three other Proficient-ranking schools for their focus on learning.

"We will collaborate as we all continue to reach and grow," he said. "We are seeking excellence. Where we are seeing excellence, we want to replicate it."

Although Neihof had alerted the Shelby County Board of Education several times to expect lower scores than the district had been used to because of the increase in expectations, what he said he did not expect was the lowest scores.

- Eighth-grade class at Collins, 13th percentile.
- Southside Elementary, 14th.
- Eighth-grade class at Shelby County, 19th.

Southside trailed the district's top elementary schools by up to 20 points in each of the three elementary school grading areas.

Collins and Shelby County's biggest issues came in the so-called Gap and Growth scores [Chart, Page A4], where

they trailed East and West middle schools considerably.

"The bar has been raised for educators and students alike to achieve at entirely new levels," Neihof said. "With higher bars, we expect hurdles as we determine potential possibilities and increased opportunities to learn. We believe where we start is important but where we finish is far more important... graduating every student to be college/career ready in 2016."

However, one of the most positive scores for the district came in the College and Career Ready scores, a focus for the new accountability program.



Shelby County was 31st out of 170 school districts, with Collins ranking 49th out of 234 high schools and Shelby County 53rd. With the bonus system, which creates extra points for students that are achieving both college- and career-ready benchmarks, the district ranks 46th of 170, and Shelby County is 63rd of 234 and Collins is 72nd.

In the release, SCHS Principal Eddie Oakley said there was an intense focus on testing assessments.

"We worked with the students to set individual goals and to understand the importance of those tests to their future," he said. "We not only exceeded our own goals but hit above the state average, which makes us very proud."

Elementary schools

The district's elementary schools came away with the highest scores, earning the highest scores in all three categories — Achievement, Gap and Growth — they are judged, and the highest overall scores.

Simpsonville had the highest achievement and growth scores but was fourth of six in GAP, which measures the proficient and distinguished scores of groups that have historically had achievement gaps.

Wright and Clear Creek all had better Gap scores.

Middle schools

The middle school scores are difficult to decipher because of Shelby County's unique situations of two sixth- and seventh-grade schools and the eighth-grade students being in with the high school students. The students could not be counted like normal sixth-to-eighth middle schools. And that was despite the district's best efforts. Neihof said he did talk to the department of education about it, but they said a change could not be made.

Because of that, East and West middle schools cannot post a College and Career Ready score because it is based on eighth-grade tests.

However, West Middle still received a proficient score, but the district has work to do with the eighth-grades at both high schools.

Their Gap and Growth scores are both well below the averages of the state, and East and West middles.

High schools

At the high school level, the district saw mixed results with the two schools. Both schools fell behind the state average in Gap but well exceed it in College and Career Readiness and Graduation Rate. There is work to be done at Shelby County in Achievement, which falls way behind Collins, but SCHS exceeds Collins in Growth.

Where Shelby's schools rank

Shelby County Public Schools rankings by percentile in the state's new Unbridled Learning Accountability Model, cover a wide range. The best ranking available is a 99, the worst a 1, but because the ranking is done by percentile, several schools and districts can hold the same ranking. Because of the way the state accountability law is written, eighth-graders at Shelby County and Collins high schools must be counted as their own schools.

Listed: school — percentile rank, Classification

District — 56, Needs Improvement

State Elementary — 48

Clear Creek — 65, Needs Improvement

Heritage — 48, Needs Improvement

Painted Stone — 72, Proficient

Simpsonville — 76, Proficient

Southside — 14, Needs Improvement

Wright — 71, Proficient

State Middle — 53.5

***Collins** — 13, Needs Improvement

***Shelby County** — 19, Needs Improvement

East — 38, Needs Improvement

West — 70, Proficient

State High School Avg. — 56

Collins High — 66, Needs Improvement

Shelby County High — 51, Needs Improvement

* 8th graders only

Kentucky school test scores released

Beechwood leads the pack of area districts

2:13 AM, Nov 2, 2012 |

Cincinnati Enquirer

Written by

William Croyle

Beechwood High School is Northern Kentucky's highest-ranked public school, and fifth-highest in the state, under the state's new "Unbridled Learning" assessment and accountability system.

In the six counties of Boone, Campbell, Kenton, Gallatin, Grant and Pendleton, Beechwood Independent Schools ranks as the best overall district. The top middle school is Highlands, while the top elementary school is Moyer, both in Fort Thomas Independent Schools.

The data on all public districts was released today by the Kentucky Department of Education.

"It's due to a lot of hard work by the teachers, administrators, parents - and the students respond," said Steve Hutton, superintendent at Beechwood. "I think the key is that everybody is always working to get better. The people here don't rest."

The system is a first step in the implementation of Common Core State Standards, a program being implemented in most states and supported by the U.S. Department of Education.

"This really is like a brand new type of grading scale or a new report card," said Lisa Gross, spokeswoman for the Kentucky Department of Education.

"We have changed the way Kentucky presents information about how well its schools and districts are doing."

Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core Standards in reading and math and the first to report test results, Gross said, putting the state "at the head of the pack as far as public schools accountability."

She said the new scores provide a much broader picture of school and district performance than previous systems.

"This gives schools and districts almost a road map so they can look at various things and make improvements. It's not just student achievement on tests but achievement gaps between groups of kids, graduation rates and student academic growth from one year to the next. Those components will help (educators) plot a course so they can improve after they see the scores," Gross said.

This is the first data released under the new system, which replaced the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The state testing that produced much of the new data was administered in May.

Northern Kentucky also had some of lowest-ranking districts in the state, including Covington, Silver Grove and Newport independents.

"I knew the issues when I was hired; we were expecting this," said Kelly Middleton, who is in his first year as superintendent in Newport. "We have been proactive this year with formative assessments and really putting a lot of money into our reading program. It's a new beginning, and now that we know our starting point, we need to improve."

Gross said parents should view the report as a valuable piece of information that can help with an overall assessment of the quality of education their children are getting.

"Parents should be aware that this is not the only way to measure a school's effectiveness," Gross said.

"Just because a school is ranked low or ranked high it doesn't give you the whole picture."

MORE

While the depth of data is overwhelming - nearly a dozen packets were emailed to media - the three pieces that most educators and parents have been waiting to see are the overall scores for each school and district, their percentiles and their classifications.

The overall score is based on a scale of 0 to 100. CATS was based on a scale of 0 to 140, one of the reasons why this year's data cannot be compared to previous years.

The overall score is derived from points earned in five components: Achievement (how students perform on state assessments), Gap (how students who traditionally underperform compared to their peers are progressing), Growth (how all students are progressing), College and Career Readiness (how well middle and high schools are preparing students for life after high school) and Graduation Rate (how many students are graduating high school on time).

Each of those components counts for a certain percentage of the overall score. The overall scores were then ranked by school level (elementary, middle and high) from best to worst and placed into percentiles.

The percentile ranking determines a school's classification: Distinguished (top 10 percent, or 90th percentile), Proficient (top 30 percent, or 70th percentile) or Needs Improvement (69th percentile or below).

There are several complicated layers beneath the scores, percentiles and classifications. For example, the achievement piece is derived from various tests, including the new K-PREP state assessment, and College and Career Readiness is based on student test performances and attainment of career academic and technical benchmarks.

The state's goal is for each student to achieve 100 percent proficiency and be college and career ready. As part of the data, each school has been given an improvement target to shoot for in each of the five components.

The data will have more of an impact after a few years when schools can make comparisons to past years to show whether they are improving in the various areas.

Unbridled Learning was the result of Senate Bill 1 in 2009, which ordered an overhaul of the state's K-12 education system. In February 2010, Kentucky was the first of 45 states to adopt the reading and math Common Core Standards, which provide consistent national benchmarks. Similar standards are currently being developed in science and social studies.

To read more about each school's and district's data from Unbridled Learning, visit www.education.ky.gov.

Local schools get report card

Rosspoint a 'School of Distinction' from state

Special to the Enterprise

Local and state education officials have been warning the public to expect a drastic drop in school and district test scores. The waiting game is over as the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) scores were released to the public early today by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Mike Howard

And, with the results, Rosspoint Elementary clearly bucked the state trend, earning the coveted title as a "School of Distinction" based on its middle school students' performance on the new state test.

"I was surprised," said Principal

Bryan Howard. "I felt we would be in the top 30 percent, but I never imagined we would break into the top four percent. However, that kind of trends with our EXPLORE scores. Our eighth graders were the 10th highest in the state of Kentucky last year and this year's eighth graders scored even higher than last year's. That will be reflected in next year's data."

An elated Howard offered all commendations toward his teaching staff.

"We have hard working, dedicated teachers who take pride in what they do," said Howard. "They want the students to be successful and we are competitive. We want to show that our schools can compete with anybody."

Howard noted that during the past two years, Rosspoint has been consistent in scoring despite "funding cuts."

From page 1A

"We have found ways to continue to provide a top notch, quality education and ensure that our students are ready for high school," he said. "Our per pupil spending is low compared to those in the other districts scoring where we scored. For value, you are getting a tremendous return on your investment at Rosspoint Elementary School."

See ROSSPOINT | 2A

According to the data, other Harlan County Schools tended to follow state patterns as Kentucky Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday had indicated would occur in numerous reports and presentations in recent months.

Across the state, 899 of 1,296 schools are now labeled as "needs improvement" as a result of the completion of the first year of testing. This indicates that the schools fell below the 70th percentile on the bell curve that has been used as a predictor for the anticipated lower scores.

"We are not shocked by the scores our schools received or the classifications placed on our schools," said Superintendent Mike Howard. "Our district and school classifications are consistent with percentages predetermined by Commissioner Holliday and the Kentucky Department of Education.

We had hoped a few more of our schools could move into the proficient category. However, the scores that we received indicate ample room for growth in this new accountability system for next year and the following years."

The data released today shows that among the state's elementary schools, 507 need improvement, 149 are proficient and 77 are distinguished.

For the middle schools, there are 232 listed as needs improvement, 65 proficient and 36 distinguished.

And, as was predicted by local and state officials, the high school level shows 160 schools in the needs improvement level, while 46 are proficient and only 24 are distinguished.

Howard said that seven of nine schools in his district were designated as needs improvement, con-

sistent with the state average. Howard explained that in addition to Rosspoint, Evarts Middle School received good news in the results. He said Evarts Middle is classified as a "proficient school." There are 284 schools in the state listed as focus schools. A focus school is one that has a non-duplicated student gap group score in the bottom 10 percent of non-duplicated student gap scores for all elementary, middle and high schools;

schools with an individual student subgroup within assessment grades by level with a score in the third standard deviation below the state average for all students; or high schools that have a graduation rate that has been less than 60 percent for two consecutive years.

Of the focus schools, 103 are at elementary schools, 106 are middle schools and 75 are high schools. Three Harlan County schools were listed as "focus schools" — Cumberland Elementary, James A. Cawood Elementary and Harlan County High School. Howard stressed that Harlan County High School fell into the category for only one reason, a subgroup score of special needs students in writing.

"This is a very complicated accountability model that will be difficult for parents, community members and teachers to fully grasp unless they really take the time to do their research and fully understand what the rewards and assistance categories as well as the school classifications truly mean," said Howard.

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In reference to the high school subgroups, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Brent Roark said, "It is perplexing when you attempt to rationalize how an entire school can be classified as a 'focus

school' based solely on the scores of special education students from one grade level in one subject area. Unless parents and community members take the time to understand what these labels mean, it is easy to be misled by the classifications and the rewards and assistance categories."

Many schools don't even receive scores in these gap areas because they don't have a reportable number in the particular area. Schools with high numbers of free and reduced lunches, special education or ethnicity students have far more chances to be named a "focus" school than a school with a lower number of these students. Many schools do not even have reportable populations of students from these areas.

There are 41 schools listed as a priority school, meaning it is a persistently low achieving school as defined by state laws governing the assessment. There are no elementary schools listed as priority schools, while only nine middle schools earned the label. There are 32 high schools in the category.

As a whole, there are 121 school districts, including Harlan County, listed as needing improvement, 35

as proficient and 18 as distinguished.

Nine school districts earned distinction status and nine had highest performing district. There are 17 districts in the focus category.

Howard said this is the first year of this accountability model - unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All, which is based on the next generation learners. Other components are scheduled to enter the model in future years. The results stem from the assessment administered to students in the spring of this year, the ACT in late March, the EXPLORE and PLAN in the fall of last year and the College and Career readiness, which entails numerous test areas.

Schools completed tests collectively named K-PREP in the spring in five content areas of reading, math, science, social studies and writing. At the high school level, four end of course exams for algebra II, English II, biology and social studies are included.

Individual student reports and performance level definitions have been revised, but the terms remain the same. Students receive reports that place their performance on the

assessment in each content area into categories of novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished. Roark explained that the new accountability model holds all schools and districts accountable for improving student performance and creates three performance classifications that determine consequences and guide interventions and supports. For 2011-2012, school and district classifications are based on five measures:

Achievement - Content areas of reading, math, science, social studies and writing;

Gap - Percentage of proficient and distinguished for the non-duplicated gap of all five content areas;

Growth - In reading and math, the percentage of students at typical or higher levels of growth;

Graduation rate - Based on averaged freshman graduation rate, referred to as AFGR;

Howard and Roark cautioned that it is important to keep in mind that the weights for each category of the accountability model will change with the addition of program reviews into the accountability model next year.

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HISD among 'Highest Performing Districts'

Special to the Enterprise

Officials of Harlan Independent School District announced school and district scores on the state assessment provided by the Kentucky Department of Education earlier today. Test results are from the state assessment and accountability system, known as K-PREP, which was implemented during the 2011-12 school year.

The new testing system is based on new state academic standards which have been deemed to be more rigorous and demanding by state and local education officials. As predicted by officials, scores around the state are lower than in previous years when tests were based on older standards.

"As we thought, scores are lower than in previous years across the state and in our schools but that is to be expected with new standards and a

new testing system," stated Harlan Independent superintendent David Johnson. "The same thing happened in the past when new standards and new tests were put in place by the state."

Despite the lower scores, Johnson expressed pleasure with many of the district and school scores for Harlan Independent Schools.

Harlan Independent School District received an overall score of 64.5 which ranked the district at the 93rd percentile as compared to all other school districts in Kentucky. Because it ranked within the top 90 percent, Harlan Independent



David Johnson

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HISD

From page 1A.

Schools is classified as a Distinguished District and is included in the rewards category as, a "Highest Performing District".

Harlan Middle School also received distinction as a Distinguished School and is listed as a "Highest Performing School" with a score of 66.2 which ranks it at the 92nd percentile of middle schools in the state.

Harlan High School is classified as a Proficient School with a score of 63.7 which ranked the school at the 87th percentile. Harlan Elementary School earned a score of 61.0 which ranked it at the 63rd percentile. Schools below the 70th percentile are classified as Needs Improvement.

"Overall, we are pleased with the classifications and rankings of the district and Harlan Middle/High School," said Johnson. "Still, we realize

that we have a lot of work to do in order to assure that all of our students are ready for college or careers after graduation. I am confident that our staff can meet this challenge as they have with others in the past."

Academic content areas tested include reading, math, science, social studies, writing, and language mechanics. Student performance levels on these exams continue to be (from lowest to highest). Novice, Apprentice, Proficient and Distinguished.

On the previous state assessment, the district goal was to have at least 75 percent of students score Proficient or Distinguished on content area tests and to have no students score Novice. Superintendent Johnson emphasized that students were able to reach this goal in several areas on

the new test. Seventy-five percent or more students scored at the highest two performance levels in middle school Science and Social Studies and high school reading and writing. There were no Novice student scores in fourth grade Science, eighth grade Social Studies, and tenth grade Writing.

"In general," Johnson continued, "our students exceeded the state average in nearly every category assessed at every level but average is not our goal and we know that our families and our community expect and need more than that. We want all of our children, regardless of their circumstances, to be prepared for success when they leave our schools and I'm confident our staff will work to meet that goal under these new standards and systems."

Johnson noted that there is still much to learn

from the test information released by the state department of education. Accountability scores at all levels include measures of academic performance of students, performance of at-risk students, and the academic improvement of students from year to year.

Middle and high school students are also measured on readiness for college and careers and high schools are accountable for graduation rates.

"In the past, we looked primarily at scores on tests," said Johnson. "We will still look at how our students performed on the academic tests but we have to review and understand much more information and how it impacts our schools and students. We will begin work on this immediately and will make the necessary adjustments."

Test results and rankings for all public schools and districts are available at the Kentucky Department of Education website at <http://open-house.education.ky.gov/>.

Daily Independent (Ashland, KY) November 2, 2012

Area schools receive their grades

KDE: Region has higher than average grad rates; falls short in career, college prep

Mike James, The Independent

ASHLAND — Most Northeast Kentucky schools showed lower rates of college and career readiness than the state average, according to figures released today by the Kentucky Department of Education.

All but two of nine area districts is classified as needing improvement.

However, a majority of area schools showed graduation rates higher than the state average, and school officials interviewed were generally pleased with what they saw.

The data is based on accountability test scores from the 2011-12 school year; students were tested in reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing under a new system that will be used for both state and federal accountability requirements.

The new system emphasizes college and career readiness and is based on newer and tougher academic expectations.

The KDE figures show only two districts with college and career ready percentages above the state average of 47.2 percent. They are Ashland, with 51.4 percent and Russell with 65 percent.

But six of nine area districts posted

graduation rates higher than the 79.6 percent statewide average.

The new system also ranks schools statewide, and that pleased some local educators whose districts ranked highly. Russell's rank of 92 signifies its scores are higher than all but eight percent of Kentucky school districts. Schools whose rank is above 70 percent are considered proficient, and Ashland was the only other area district to achieve that level with 77.

"We are generally pleased with the results of the scores," said Richard Oppenheimer, Ashland's curriculum coordinator.

Five of Ashland's seven schools also were classified as proficient and one of them, Hager Elementary, is in the top one percent in the state. That makes its classification a school of distinction.

The data reveal areas Ashland needs to improve, including closing achievement gaps among certain demographic groups, mainly low income.

Officials in the Carter County district were delighted with the district's ranking of 62. Although that means the district as a whole is classified as needing improvement, East Carter High School's ranking of 71 gives it a proficient classification — a dramatic turnaround in a school that had been classified as persistently low achieving.

"We're very excited," Superintendent Ronnie Dotson said. "The new system is a more balanced approach."

The rankings are useful to educators in assessing the district's progress compared to other districts with similar demographics and resources, Dotson said.

Greenup County, where the high school also was designated as persistently low achieving, also is encouraged by its college and career readiness rate of 51.3 percent and its 82 percent graduation rate. Greenup ranked 30, however, putting it in the bottom third of Kentucky schools.

But the scores show Greenup is digging out of the low-achievement hole, said assessment director Diana Whitt. The new data is more thorough and also will tell her which student groups need more help.

It is important to remember the data represents a new start in tracking school performance, said Boyd County assessment coordinator Marilyn Mayo. "We're starting with a new baseline," she said. It will take a couple of years before trends show up.

Boyd County's rank was 54, putting it in the needs improvement category, but its graduation rate is an impressive 91 percent.

Kentucky is the first state to test students under the new and rigorous common core standards that are on their way to becoming educational benchmarks nationwide, said Russell Superintendent Susan Compton. "We're laying a foundation and this is the first step," she said.

MORE



Parents should not be overly concerned that scores are almost certain to be lower in math and language arts, according to Compton. Partly that is because scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100 instead of 0 to 140.

All the data is available on the education department's web site but in a week or so, parents will see the individual scores of their children and that is where they should look closely, Oppenheimer said.

Then they can talk to school counselors to discuss the results.

Also important under the new system is working toward improvement in all students, Russell chief academic officer Debbie Finley said. That is particularly true in a district like Russell, with many high-achieving students. "We have to look at each student because even the high-performing ones are expected to show growth," she said.

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**Daily Independent (Ashland,
KY) October 28, 2012**

Blazer invites vets to lunch Nov. 9

In Your View

Paul G. Blazer High School cordially invites all military veterans and active-duty personnel for a Veterans Day appreciation lunch in your honor on Friday, Nov. 9. The luncheon will begin at 10:30 a.m. and take place in the gym lobby. There will be a brief ceremony of appreciation followed by lunch served by our JROTC instructors and cadets.

A display of past military weapons as well as military vehicles will be available for all to view throughout the day. All those who wish to attend are asked to contact the school at (606) 327-6040 to RSVP by Nov. 8. An RSVP is not required to attend; it will simply be used to help us anticipate how many will be in attendance. We look forward to seeing all veterans and their families on Nov. 9.

Derek S. Runyon, Principal, Paul
G. Blazer High School

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Floyd County Times (Prestonsburg) 11.2.12

Schools take step back under new test model

by Ralph B. Davis, Managing Editor

School administrators say they are concerned about Floyd County's showing in the most recent round of state testing, but add that they now have information which allow the district to move forward.

"Overall, we've got some bright spots and we've got some areas of concern," Superintendent Henry Webb said Thursday.

The results, released today, are the first to be released under new guidelines for assessing school performance. As a result of the new rules, Webb said schools statewide took a step backward, but he conceded that Floyd County didn't keep pace with some other districts.

The new model — dubbed the Unbridled Learning accountability model — includes "student achievement growth measures, emphasis on college and career readiness, high school graduation rates, student achievement in five content areas and an increased focus on the lowest-performing schools," according to a statement released by the district.

"We were challenged with a new accountability system, new cut scores and new standards in reading and mathematics, and while we have pockets of excellence, we didn't meet that challenge as a district," Webb said. "We are a district that needs improvement, and we are taking steps to address any and all areas of concern in curriculum, instruction and assessment."

But Webb said that even under the new rules, some familiar patterns emerged.

"Our elementary schools outperformed the state in most areas," Webb said. "Our middle schools outperformed the state in some areas, and our high schools still need improvement."

Webb singled out May Valley Elementary and Osborne Elementary for having an exceptional showing on the assessment.

"Once again, May Valley is one of the top elementary schools in the state of Kentucky, and one of only 40 deemed a 'School of Distinction,'" Webb said. "And this year shows Osborne Elementary to have moved from being in the top half of elementary schools in the state, to being in the top 15 percent, and that places them one of 37 elementary schools in the category of 'Highest Performing School.'"

Webb also noted that McDowell Elementary, Allen Central Middle School and the middle-school grades at Betsy Layne Elementary joined May Valley and Osborne as the five Floyd County schools to have reached "proficient" status, meaning they scored in the top 30 percent statewide.

On the flip side, Prestonsburg High School and South Floyd High School were identified as "focus schools," meaning they will receive increased attention from administrators in an attempt to close some gaps in instruction.

"It means exactly what it says," Webb said. "They are going to get some intensive focus."

Webb said Floyd County, as a district, placed seventh out of 19 school districts in its region.

Going forward, Webb said the district will work to align its curriculum with state and national standards, provide high-quality professional development in areas of instruction, use a District-Wide Intervention Model to address needs of students and schools, and implement a "name and claim" system of working with each student to individually identify steps needed to ensure all students are ready for careers or college.

MORE



Webb said that pursuing that agenda will allow the district to meet its goal of having 65 percent of students college- or career-ready by 2015. The number today is 30 percent.

"These results tell us how we are doing for our kids and where we need to improve," Webb said. "Our commitment is to make sure that every child in Floyd County schools is college- and career-ready when they graduate and prepared for postsecondary opportunities, and we will reach that goal for our kids."

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Floyd County Times (Prestonsburg) 10.31.12

With no water, South Floyd dismisses early

HI HAT -- Due to a lack of water, South Floyd High School and South Floyd Middle School are dismissing at 11:30 a.m., today.

Superintendent Henry Webb made the announcement via Twitter, saying, "School dismissal at SFHS/SFMS at 11:30 a.m. due to lack of water."

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Floyd County Times (Prestonsburg) 10.29.12

Schools monitoring storm conditions

by Jack Latta, Staff Writer

Officials with the Floyd County School system are monitoring the impact of the current super-storm spinning into eastern Kentucky.

Current weather projections for Eastern Kentucky include everything from torrential rains to blizzards bringing four to eight inches of snow.

On Monday, Superintendent Henry Webb said that school officials have not made any decisions yet, but that they are staying in contact with the national weather service in Jackson to monitor the event.

"At this time we're just monitoring the changing conditions," said Webb. "We're still hoping that it misses us."

We will continue to update this story as more information becomes available.

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**Appalachian News-Express – Pikeville –
Friday, Nov. 2, 2012**

New test results reveal good, bad in local schools

A News-Express Staff Report

The results are in of the state's new school assessment model — Unbridled Learning — and for Pike County and the Pikeville Independent School District, the results are a mixed bag.

For the Pikeville Independent School District, the new accountability model ranks the district as one of nine "Districts of Distinction," marking it as one of the top districts in the state. Pikeville High School's scores marked it as one of 8 high schools in the state named as a "Highest Performing School."

The Pike County School District, however, joined the greatest majority of districts in the state, as being labeled "Needs Improvement," as the district ranked among the lowest 18th percentile in the state.

Two schools within the Pike County School District, however, were also named "Focus Schools" — Belfry High School and Elkhorn City Elementary. Focus Schools are schools in which at least one The district, however, also saw some big successes, with elementary level students at Dorton Elementary and the schools making up the future Valley Elementary, and middle school level students at the future Valley Elementary, registering as the district's sole schools being classified as "Proficient."

In a news conference held on Thursday, Pike County Board of Education officials presented the News-Express with a letter which will be sent home with each student in the district on Friday.

"Pike County district personnel, principals, teachers and students have the skills necessary to turn this around to demonstrate our students are college and career ready," the letter said.

The letter also asks for parents to take a role in helping the district improve.

"Please work with your schools and find out what you can do to support this effort to move Pike County to the top 10 percent of all Kentucky districts," the letter said.

The new assessment system, unlike its predecessor, measures student achievement growth, emphasis on college and career readiness, high school graduation rates, student achievement in five content areas and increases focus on the lowest-performing schools.

The assessment scores were made available to the media earlier this week, but embargoed until 12:01

a.m. Friday, and the News-Express has conducted interviews with officials at the Pikeville Independent and Pike County school districts, including principals and others.

For full details on the scores, as well as analysis regarding what the scores and rankings mean, see the weekend edition of the News-Express.

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Scores Drop on Ky.'s Common Core-Aligned Tests

By Andrew Ujifusa

Results from new state tests in Kentucky—the first in the nation explicitly tied to the Common Core State Standards—show that the share of students scoring “proficient” or better in reading and math dropped by roughly a third or more in both elementary and middle school the first year the tests were given.

Kentucky in 2010 was the first state to adopt the common core in English/language arts and mathematics, and the assessment results released last week for the 2011–12 school year are being closely watched by school officials and policymakers nationwide for what they may reveal about how the common standards may affect student achievement in coming years. So far, 46 states have adopted the English/language arts common standards; 45 states have done so in math.

Two federally funded consortia are working on assessments based on the common standards, and those tests are not slated to be fully ready for schools until 2014–15. But Kentucky’s tests are generally understood to be linked to the common core.

“What you’re seeing in Kentucky is a predictor of what you’re going to see in the other states, as the assessments roll out next year and the year after,” said Gene Wilhoit, the executive director of the Washington-based Council of Chief

State School Officers, which spearheaded the common-core initiative along with the National Governors Association. Mr. Wilhoit was also previously Kentucky’s education commissioner.

Falling Scores

The drop in Kentucky’s scores conform to what state education officials had expected: that students in grades 3–8 taking the new, more-rigorous Kentucky Performance Rating of Education Progress, or K-PREP, would not be able to reach their achievement levels of prior years. Kentucky began implementing the common standards in the 2011–12 school year.

The biggest drop came at the elementary level. On the previous Kentucky Core Content Tests, 76 percent of elementary students scored proficient or higher in reading in the 2010–11 school year. That percentage plunged to 48 percent for the K-PREP results in the 2011–12 school year, a drop-off in proficiency of more than a third.

In 2010–11, 73 percent of elementary students were proficient or better in math, but that fell to 40.4 percent. That drop represents a 45 percent decline in the share of proficient students.

Middle schoolers’ decline was a little less steep. In reading, they dropped from a 70 percent proficiency level in 2010–

11 to 46.8 percent in 2011–12, a decline of a third. In math, proficiency-or-better levels declined slightly more than that, from 65 percent in 2010–11 to 40.6 percent in 2011–12.

Overall, students in grades 3–8 demonstrated somewhat higher proficiency levels in reading than in math.

When new tests are introduced, states can expect scores to fall in most cases, said Douglas McRae, a retired assessment designer who helped build California’s testing system. “When you change the measure, change the tests, then you interrupt the continuity of trend data over time. That’s the fundamental thing that happens,” he said.

Kentucky developed its tests in conjunction with Pearson, the New York City-based education and testing company, which is also crafting curricula for the common core.

K-PREP does not represent the final, polished version of common-core assessments. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, and the Smarter

Balanced Assessment Consortium are designing the tests that most states have signed on to for gauging students’ mastery of the common standards nationwide beginning in the 2014–15

→ MORE

school year. (Kentucky belongs to the PARCC consortium.)

But Mr. Wilhoit said K-PREP represents the state's best effort, along with Pearson's, "to develop an assessment that was representative of the common core."

Proficiency drops also occurred in the end-of-course tests in reading and math Kentucky administered to high school students. But those declines were smaller than those in the earlier grades, and a state study shows that while the K-PREP tests are completely aligned with the common standards, the high school end-of-course tests (from the ACT QualityCore program) are only about 80 percent to 85 percent aligned to the standards.

The proficiency level in high school reading dropped from 65 percent to 52.2 percent (a figure 6 percentage points higher than the state's prediction), based on the end-of-course tests, while proficiency in math fell from 46 percent to 40 percent on the Algebra 2 test, beating the state's prediction by 4 percentage points.

Commissioner's Take

Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday said that students beat the state's predictions for both the K-PREP and end-of-course exams. Using a statistical model that predicted ACT performance based on academic results in reading and math in 2011, for example, the state estimated a 36 percentage-point drop in elementary reading scores in 2011-12, instead of the actual 28-point drop.

"We're just a little bit above our prediction, which I think is a pretty good testament to our teaching," Mr. Holliday said.

Earlier exposure to the common standards, he suggested, would help younger students at first.

"It's going to take a little longer to see middle and high school growth on these tests," Mr. Holliday said. "It'll take about five years to see an overall growth of significance at all levels."

But based on national benchmarks, the new K-PREP tests may not have been rigorous enough, said Richard Innes, an education policy analyst at the Bluegrass Institute, a conservative-leaning Lexington, Ky.-based think tank.

In a report released the week of Oct. 29 for the institute, Mr. Innes compared the K-PREP math scores for 8th graders this year (41.5 percent proficient or better) with the results on the ACT Explore test this year (30.5 percent) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress proficiency levels in 2011 (31 percent).

"There are questions in my mind as to whether they are rigorous enough in several areas," he said. Different subject tests appeared to have been more rigorous in different grade levels, Mr. Innes said. The math in middle schools appears to be the subject where K-PREP is less rigorous than NAEP or Explore tests, he noted. He drew the same conclusion about K-PREP reading results at the elementary school level.

One number that went up: the proportion of students qualifying as college and/or career ready, which rose to 47 percent in 2011-12, from 38 percent the previous year. Mr. Holliday attributed that rise to the state creating more career pathways and bringing more introductory college courses to high school seniors to prevent the need for postsecondary remediation.

"To get that much improvement in the first year is extraordinary, I think," said Bob King, the president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, based in Frankfort, Ky.

Preparing the Public

To combat a potential public backlash from the lower scores, Mr. Holliday noted that he had enlisted the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce as part of a yearlong public relations campaign.

Florida schools earlier this year endured a significant backlash when proficiency rates on its state writing tests dropped by two-thirds after a tougher grading system was introduced, forcing the state school board to change the test's cutoff score retroactively.

"We knew the scores were going to drop, but this is the right thing for our kids, our schools," he said. "You're going

to see quite a different reaction in Kentucky because we watched what happened everywhere else," Mr. Holliday said.

➔ MORE

But the transition for schools can be disappointing for some, especially in the short term. Carmen Coleman, the superintendent of the Danville Independent district, said she was proud of how the school system had progressed over the past three years from a ranking of 110th to 24th among the state's 174 districts, only to tumble back to the middle of the pack in the newest rankings of school districts.

"It's a tough blow for teachers and students," she said.

The Kentucky PTA has received grant money from the National PTA to educate parents and others about the new standards, but the state group's president, Teri Gale, said it doesn't mean people won't be caught off guard by the lower-than-usual results.

"They've heard us talk about it. They've seen the newscasts and everything," Ms. Gale said. "But until they actually see the scores, I don't think it's going to hit home that this is what we were talking about."

Coverage of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the common assessments is supported in part by a grant from the GE Foundation, at www.ge.com/foundation.

Test scores show gaps in Paducah, McCracken

Accountability scores vary in the region

BY JODY NORWOOD

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School districts in western Kentucky formed a wide bell curve in the state's new Unbridled Spirit accountability model.

The first year of test results is considered a baseline for districts. That foundation varied across the area's 17 public school districts, from lows of 44.4 at Fulton County and 46 at Fulton Independent to highs of 73.3 at Murray Independent and 64.9 at Marshall County.

Tamara Smith, Fulton Independent superintendent, said the district struggled with gap students, those designated as minorities, having disabilities, free or reduced-price meals or a limited English proficiency. Of the district's 371 students, only 35 don't fit into a subgroup, Smith said.

"We're not happy with the scores," Smith said. "They're low. We do have a plan and we're going to start implementing it to get those numbers up."

Smith said the district is planning open house meetings to discuss what the numbers mean and areas of concern with students and parents. The path to higher scores will start by focusing on specific divisions such as achievement or college and career readiness, Smith said.

Several districts were also classified as highest performing, having scored in the 90th percentile with a graduation rate above 60 percent

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for the prior two years. Jonathan, Sharpe, Lowes and Hendron-Lone Oak elementary schools, Heath, Murray and Lyon Middle and Calloway County High were all highest performing schools. Marshall County also qualified as a highest performing district.

Districtwide, Murray Independent placed in the top 2 percent of all schools, followed by Calloway County in the top 6 percent and Marshall County in the top 7 percent. Lyon County also placed in the top 10 percent. By being in the 90th percentile, all schools are considered distinguished by state standards.

Seven area districts—Fulton County, Fulton Independent, Livingston Central, Carlisle County, Paducah Independent, Trigg County and Mayfield Independent—were ranked below 70 percent and categorized as needs improvement. The average

Western Kentucky school districts percentile rankings

- Murray Independent – 98 (fourth highest ranking school statewide)
- Calloway County – 94
- Marshall County – 93
- Lyon County – 91
- McCracken County – 89
- Hickman County – 79
- Graves County – 76
- Ballard County – 75
- Caldwell County – 73
- Crittenden County – 71
- Trigg County – 68
- Mayfield Independent – 54
- Carlisle County – 50
- Livingston County – 36
- Paducah Independent – 28
- Fulton Independent – 7
- Fulton County – 5

score of all 17 districts was 58.7.

"We know what we need to do because we have the new data and we've learned from our success in the past," said Carla Whitis, Graves County assistant superintendent for second-

ary instruction, in a written statement. "Schools will analyze the data to intentionally focus on the areas each needs to address."

Call Jody Norwood, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8658.

District schools will use reported scores to address student strengths, weaknesses

BY JODY NORWOOD

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New statewide accountability models for student achievement released today highlight gaps in students at McCracken County and Paducah schools.

Districtwide, McCracken County schools ranked proficient, landing a score of 63.2 and ranking in the top 11 percent of schools. Paducah Public Schools are categorized as needs improvement, scoring 51.4 and ranking in the 8th percentile.

"We are very pleased with where we are," said Nancy Waldrop, McCracken superintendent. "We were one point shy of being a distinguished district, but we're very proud of our scores and how our children have learned."

Unbridled Learning, the new method of testing, divides student achievement into categories based on grade level. High school students are evaluated on achievement, gap, growth, college and career readiness, and graduation rates.

The state classifies gap students as minorities, students with disabilities, on free or reduced-price meal programs or those with limited English proficiencies.

Graduation rates are not calculated into scores for middle and elementary

Donald Shively, assistant superintendent for Paducah schools, said the baseline year establishes areas where the district needs to grow.

"One of our goals is to close the gap, specifically the achievement gap between subpopulations that aren't performing as well as what our state now defines as non-gap students," Shively said. "When you look at us as a district, we're one of the most diverse in the state. Roughly 80 percent of the assessments we gave were to students considered in the gap group."

Shively said Paducah schools embrace the diversity of having a large population of gap students, and will work on meeting new standards for those students.

While the numbers are low for gap students, Shively said the test reinforced that growth is being made with top performing students. Almost half of the district's fourth through eighth grade distinguished reading students were in the top 10 percent in the state.

A total of 84 distinguished students were in the top 25 percent.

Students in the same grades had similar percentages in the top 10 and 25 percent of distinguished math scores.

"We feel like we're doing a great job of stretching the

top, but with that, it brings out the students who have fallen into our gap categories," Shively said. "We've got to continue to close that achievement gap. It's a national issue."

Shively said the district works with community agencies such as the United Way and the Oscar Cross Boys and Girls Club to improve student achievement.

McCracken County Schools, with a smaller percentage of gap students, scored higher districtwide. Concord Elementary, Heath Middle, Hendron-Lone Oak Elementary, Lone Oak Middle

and Reidland Elementary were categorized as distinguished, scoring in the top 10 percent of schools across the state. Only two schools — Reidland High School and Farley Elementary School — are considered as needs improvement schools.

Assessment Coordinator Melanie Jarvis said gap students scored well in the district. Jarvis said the school will use testing data to evaluate strengths and weaknesses for each school and develop plans to improve those numbers.

Concord Elementary was the highest scoring in the district with an overall score of 74.3, placing it in the top 24 of 800 schools across the state. Lone Oak Middle School and Reidland Elementary also ranked in the top 5 percent of Kentucky schools.

Concord Elementary Principal Ginger Hollowell said the score was a mix of training, instruction and a balanced assessment system to intervene with students who might falter.

"We are excelling in the area of being able to define a clear academic standard for a given period of time," Hollowell said. "This is where we are now, this is what we want you to learn today, this is what we want

you to learn next week. We've had help to do that from the district. The students should be able to articulate that every day."

Hollowell said it was also important for students to make real-world connections to material learned.

Both districts plan to communicate what the scores are and what they mean with parents and students in coming months.

Call Jody Norwood, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8658.

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students. For elementary school students, achievement and gap each make up 30 percent of the score, with growth accounting for the other 40 percent.

K-PREP: DCPS on top, OPS struggles

BY MEGAN HARRIS
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Owensboro Public Schools scored among the worst in the state on the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) exams, administered statewide in April, while Daviess County Public Schools scored in the top 20 percent.

Results released Friday mark the first wave of data from the Unbridled Learning accountability model, first mandated by Senate Bill 1 in 2009 and implemented at the start of the 2011-12 school year.

Each school and district received an overall score on a scale from 1 to 100, which were rank-ordered both by district and elementary, middle and high school levels. Schools and districts were dubbed distinguished for scoring in the top 10 percent, proficient for the top 30 percent and needs improvement for those below the 70th percentile.

Of regional districts, only those in Daviess, Hancock and Ohio counties earned a rating of proficient with Owensboro Independent, McLean and

Muhlenberg counties all noted as needs improvement.

As a Focus District, Owensboro will have the most ground to cover in the coming months, drafting a hyper-vigilant comprehensive school improvement plan. OPS joined 10 other districts in the bottom 6 percent across the state, earning an overall score of 45.7 on a 100-point scale.

"If you look at the percentile rankings, we look pretty far away from proficiency, but really we're only a little over 12 points away," said Paula Roberts, assistant superintendent for instruction. "Almost everyone in the state fell within a 20-point range, so to say we're at the bottom is true, but it's not the whole picture."

Superintendent Larry Vick cited a "perfect storm" of limitations in a meeting last week, including a lack of growth district-wide. At the elementary school level, growth in reading and mathematics accounts for 40 percent of a school's overall score. In middle school and high school, growth is worth only 28 and 20 percent, respectively.

"We don't want to make excuses; we want to make progress," Vick said. "Obviously we aren't pleased with the results, but we're going to strive really hard to make progress."

Among Owensboro schools, only Newton Parrish and Sutton elementaries were deemed proficient, earning percentile rankings of 78 and 73, respectively. Both campuses of Owensboro Middle School, Estes Elementary and Foust Elementary were ranked between the 1st and 15th percentile.

"We definitely have room to improve," Roberts said, "but I'm so proud of our teachers, especially at the (middle school's) south campus. They're at the very bottom, but they haven't acted defeated or frustrated. They're strategizing, volunteering

to pull these kids out during their planning time to give them extra support. It's been exciting to see the grass-roots efforts of those teachers. They want to give the absolute best instruction they can."

In Daviess County, 14 of 17 schools were deemed proficient or above, with Highland and Burns elementary schools earning distinguished status and reward recognition. Its overall score was 60.1 — which put it in the 82nd percentile. Jana Beth Francis, DCPS director of assessment, research and curriculum development, said teachers at Meadow Lands Elementary and both Apollo and Daviess County high schools have already rallied to improve their less-than-proficient scores.

"To come in as a district at proficiency this first round and know we're in the top 30 percent of schools and school districts really

means that we can now focus in on our improvement," she said. "Instead of rethinking everything, we get to refine."

Going forward, both Roberts and Francis emphasized individualized learning.

"That's what this K-PREP system is about," Francis said. "We want to reach children at whatever level they're at and bring them up — constantly improve — and use whatever strategies we can to give our students the best chance to go on to college and find and sustain a meaningful career."

When schools are proficient, it reflects on students and their hard work, said DCPS Superintendent Owens Saylor.

"We get caught up in rankings and pride for our district, and we are proud, but this is first and foremost about the learner," he said. "It's their lives ahead that are being affected by positive scores."

Of Muhlenberg County's eight sites, only Bremen Elementary School was deemed proficient with a score of 63 (72nd percentile). Ohio County — 58.5 overall (72nd percentile) — boasted five proficient schools, including Horse Branch Elementary School, which earned the district-high ranking of 86.

McLean County High School and Livermore Elementary School earned "needs improvement" rankings, though two other McLean County sites scored in the 79th percentile or above. Overall, the district scored 57.7 (65th percentile).

To the east, Hancock County earned a score of 62.1 (87th percentile). The district's middle, high and South elementary school each scored proficient in the 84th percentile or above with only North Hancock Elementary said to need improvement.

Unbridled Learning — used for both state and federal reporting — was designed to hold public schools accountable for five primary areas: achievement on subject-area tests; gaps in academic performance among students who are ethnic minorities, have disabilities,

continued

are English-language learners or come from low-income households and students who do not fit into those categories; growth in reading and mathematics; college and career readiness and graduation rate.

Administrators expect to receive individual student data in the coming days.

Nov. 2, 2012

Area school scores solid in K-PREP

By CHUCK MASON

The Daily News

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Local students posted scores above the state average on standardized tests taken last spring, according to data released today.

The tests were in response to Kentucky's adoption of common core standards in various subject areas. Parents will receive report cards on their children in a couple of weeks, showing how they rank as to fellow students, within their district and in comparison to other students across the state.

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More than
half not
prepared
for college
or careers.
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The tests have two components – assessment and accountability. This is the first year for Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress, or K-PREP, tests that measure students' progress in reading, math, science, social studies and writing.

"It's a lot like the ACT (test)," said Kendall Briley, 17, a senior at Bowling Green High School. "Most of my friends passed it, I passed it." Briley took an end-of-course test for algebra last spring.

"I think you can get a better indication of (academic) ability in the classroom than through tests – but they (the tests) are not totally off the mark," said Jessica Agro, 17, a senior at Greenwood High School. Agro took an end-of-course exam for U.S. history last spring.

Drew Norwood, 18, a senior at South Warren High School, said she took the exams last spring in U.S. history and Algebra II. "U.S. history was a little harder. I get math," Norwood said. She said her teachers outline information in preparation for the tests, but don't teach to it.

"I love all my teachers – they prepare us well," she said.

It is also the first year for Unbridled Learning: College and Career Readiness for All, which uses K-PREP student performance and other factors to give each school and district an overall score.

Gone is the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, or CATS, which used a different methodology.

The Bowling Green Independent School District received a score of 59.2 and the Warren County Public School District received a score of 58.1, both above the state average of 55.2. The numbers are out of a possible 100 points.

"In general, we are pleased with the results," said Superintendent Joe Tinius of the city school district. "We also see that there is a lot of work to be done."

"It's a starting point for both teachers and students," said Kathy Goff, assistant superintendent of the county school district.

In information made public today, four schools received "distinguished" status, the top designation. Results include the school's overall score out of 100 possible points (first number in parentheses) and the school's percentile ranking in Kentucky (second number):

- South Warren High School (68.1, 95)

- Greenwood High School (65.2, 91)

- Potter Gray Elementary School (71, 92)

- W.R. McNeill Elementary School (71, 92).

The other designations awarded were "proficient" and "needs improvement."

At the high school level, Bowling Green High School (59.1, 74) was awarded a "proficient" designation while Warren Central High School (50.9, 29) and Warren East High School (52.1, 37) were awarded "needs improvement" designations.

"I don't think that shows how our high school is," said Lincoln Quick, 17, a junior at BGHS. "There are some kids who blow it off, and there are some kids that really try."

Quick took end-of-course exams in U.S. history and English last spring.

"It worked out for us because we have good teachers here," Briley said. "But at other schools, it

may not have worked out."

"Do I think that this score represents the quality of education delivered at Warren Central High School and Warren East High School? Absolutely not," Goff said.

"I don't think any one assessment can be administered to any school and be truly equitable to every situation," Tinius said.

Bowling Green Junior High School (60, 74), Drakes Creek Middle School (60.2, 76), South Warren Middle School (62.9, 86) and Warren East Middle School (61.3, 80) all were given "proficient" designations, along with Briarwood Elementary School (64.1, 75), Cumberland Trace Elementary School (69.3, 88), and Natcher Elementary School (64.3, 76).

"Distinguished" is the top 10 percent of schools measured; "proficient" is the top 30 percent; and "needs improvement" means the school didn't make the other two categories.

Other "needs improvement" schools are Henry F. Moss Middle School (49.9, 32), T.C. Cherry Elementary School (57.1, 48), Dishman-McGinnis Elementary School (52.4, 31), Parker-Bennett Curry Elementary School (45.5, 10), Alvaton Elementary School (61.2, 64), Bristow Elementary School (55.9, 42), Lost River Elementary School (54.7, 38), North Warren Elementary School (56.7, 46), Oakland Elementary School (51, 25), Plano Elementary School (61.2, 64), Rich Pond Elementary School (60.9, 63), Richlandville Elementary School (51.1, 26), Rockfield Elementary School (59.7, 58) and Warren Elementary School (43.4, 7).

The overall scores are compiled by looking at student achievement and some new measurements called "gap" and "growth." Gap is a measurement of how well students in at-risk populations achieve academically, while growth measures how each individual student progresses each year compared with achievement of like peers, according to definitions provided by the local school districts.

— For more information, visit the Open House portal on the Kentucky Department of Education website at openhouse.education.ky.gov/.

State releases report card on schools

By Mark Bell, Contributing Writer
The Middlesboro Daily News
Nov. 2, 2012
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The three school districts in Bell County ranked in the bottom half among school districts in the state under the new assessment and accountability model – Unbridled Learning – released by state officials today.

While a few individual schools ranked among the top half of state schools, none surpassed the level needed to exceed the “needs improvement” category.

Designed to measure student readiness for college and career performance, the new state measurement is a vast change from the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) in place over the past decade.

Officials caution parents and the public not to draw any comparisons to test scores from prior years and not to be surprised by school and student scores that are lower than expected.

Under the new system, Kentucky’s schools are scored on a scale of 1-100 with the top 90 percent of schools being labeled “distinguished.” Schools ranking in the 70-89th percentile are now to be considered “proficient,” with all others falling under the “needs improvement” designation.

Across the state, 899 of 1,296 schools are now labeled as “needs improvement” as a result of the completion of the first year of testing. This indicates that the schools fell below the 70th percentile on the bell curve that has been used as a predictor for the anticipated lower scores.

While no schools in the county were designated as distinguished, four schools in the Bell County School District – Central School Center Elementary, Frakes Middle, Right Fork Middle, and Yellow Creek Middle – were designated as proficient. No schools in the Middlesboro or Pineville districts scored above the 69th percentile.

“I think there’s a big difference between the ‘Needs Improvement’ category and No Child Left Behind which labeled these schools as failing,” said Dr. Terry Holliday, Kentucky Education Commissioner. “These schools are not failing. They just have particular components they need to work on.”

Holliday added that the new system “raises the bar” for student achievement within individual school districts by taking into consideration student growth as well as college and career readiness. Schools in the “need improvement” category will have follow-up reviews from the state department of education.

All but the high school within the Middlesboro Independent School District were designated as a “focus school,” which means they scored in the bottom ten percent in the state in a measure known as a “gap group score.” That score is designed to measure the performance of student groups that have historically had achievement gaps (for example: racial minorities, special education, poverty, or limited English proficiency). **MORE**

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There are 284 schools in the state listed as focus schools. Of those, 103 are at elementary schools, 106 are middle schools and 75 are high schools.

The higher performing schools in the county were:

- Frakes Middle with an overall score of 62.6 and a state ranking of 85
- Right Fork Middle with an overall score of 61.7 and a state ranking of 81
- Bell Central School Center Elementary with an overall score of 64.9 and a state ranking of 78
- Yellow Creek Middle with an overall score of 59.4 and a state ranking of 72
- Frakes Elementary with an overall score of 60.4 and a state ranking of 60
- Bell Central Middle with an overall score of 56.1 and a state ranking of 57
- Pineville Middle with an overall score of 55.0 and a state ranking of 54
- Middlesboro High with an overall score of 54.7 and a state ranking of 51

All other schools were below the 50th percentile state ranking, with one school, West End Elementary in Middlesboro, ranking at the 1st percentile, the lowest level in the state's new system.

The data released today shows that among the state's elementary schools, 507 need improvement, 149 are proficient and 77 are distinguished.

For the middle schools, there are 232 listed as needs improvement, 65 proficient and 36 distinguished.

And, as was predicted by local and state officials, the high school level shows 160 schools in the needs improvement level, while 46 are proficient and only 24 are distinguished.

END

The Kentucky Standard

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Boston School 'distinguished' in KPREP

Benchmark year will help officials see what areas need improvement

By Jennifer Corbett

Friday, November 2, 2012 at 12:00 am (Updated: November 2, 12:03 am)

Test results were released Friday for schools statewide, and Nelson County schools had at least one reason to celebrate.

Boston School's elementary ranked among the top 10 percent in the state, earning it the county's only "distinguished" ranking.

"Boston is something we're excited about," said Anthony Orr, superintendent of Nelson County schools. "Boston has a good, strong school. It's very exciting for them and their students and for the whole district."

Boston's score was the highest in the area. Other schools, both in the county and city systems, ranked near the statewide median.

Results from the 2011-2012 school year were from the Kentucky Performance Rating for Education Progress (KPREP) accountability system, which replaced the Kentucky Core Content Test that was under the CATS system used in previous years.

Brent Holsclaw, superintendent of the Bardstown Independent Board of Education, said the KPREP scores indicate a "new beginning."

Officials received several documents Friday outlining how their district schools scored in KPREP's five sections (achievement, growth, gap, college/career readiness and graduation rate) compared to schools throughout Kentucky.

Nelson County schools had an overall score of 54.1, which put them in the 45th percentile. Since Thomas Nelson High School just opened this school year, they were not included in the test results.

Bardstown schools had an overall score of 51.6, which put them in the 29th percentile. Both districts were labeled, as "needs improvement."

"One of the things we really like about the new testing system is there's much more info about how we're doing our job," Orr said. "Now we're in the process of digging into the data and looking into how we can help individual students grow. And as we pull it all together, it will move our school system forward."

This year's scores under KPREP have no direct comparison to the CATS system, because the grading scales are different. KPREP is on a scale of zero to 100, while CATS used a 140-point scale.

Holsclaw added that while this year's scores might appear lower, the standards in which they're scored far outweigh any perceived negatives.

"Students are being challenged more and are more prepared for the future" in this global economy, he said.

Once a school's grade is set, they are ranked amongst other schools in Kentucky. The benchmark for the 70th percentile was 62.5 for elementary schools, 58.7 for middle schools, 58 for high schools and 58.4 for school districts.

Bardstown High School scored at the benchmark with an overall score of 58, while Boston School elementary students surpassed the elementary benchmark with a score of 70.9.

Now that they know how Nelson County schools stand, Orr said they know what areas they can improve and what techniques are working.

"We have all of this data that helps us work more effectively with our students," he said. "I think we stack up well against neighboring districts."

Orr noted that the KPREP scores are a "pat on the back" for Nelson County school employees.

At the end of the day, Holsclaw said the main goal is the same as ever: prepare students so they can be successful in a global economy.

"Our goal as a school system has always been to prepare students for the future," Holsclaw said. "Now we have an accountability system that helps us measure our success."

Corbin Independent Schools named District of **DISTINCTION**

BY THE NUMBERS

School districts' percentile ranking on Kentucky School Report Card (Source: Kentucky Dept. of Education)

Corbin

97

Whitley County

54

Williamsburg

78

Knox County

7

Barbourville Independent

23

Laurel County

54

East Bernstadt

10

SCHOOL FROM FRONT PAGE

District-wide, Corbin Independent fared exceptionally well on the state's report card.

Corbin got an overall score of 66.9. The Percentile Rank in Kentucky was at 97. The district was classified as Distinguished. And because of that, the state rewarded Corbin Independent as a District of Distinction.

Most Tri-County districts, schools need improvement, according to new test scores

By JEFF NOBLE, STAFF WRITER

For one Tri County school district, the Kentucky School Report Card had high marks. For another district, the state classified them as "Proficient." For the other districts, that same report card showed their school systems needing improvement.

For all districts here and across the state, officials are pouring over reams of information, trying to decipher the endless figures as the state completed a new round of standards, tests and scores that were released today.

As a district, the Corbin Independent Schools was designated as a "District of Distinction" by the

Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). The Williamsburg Independent Schools got the "Proficient" classification from the KDE. According to the state, the districts classified as "Needing Improvement" were Knox County, East Bernstadt Independent, Barbourville Independent, Whitley County and Laurel County.

It's all because of what's called "Unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All" — a new assessment and accountability model developed by the Kentucky Board of Education.

"Kentucky is the first state to adopt common

core standards in math and reading, and the first state to assess new common core standards. The new standards are much harder and more stringent, because of the increased difficulty of the tests," said Dave Cox, Administrative Assistant for the Corbin Independent Schools on Tuesday.

He added the new standards would help prepare students for college and career readiness.

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According to the KDE, an individual school or school district is classified as "Distinguished" if their score is in the top 10 percent of districts or schools from a particular level, or in this case, the 90th to 99th percentile in the state.

Also, schools and districts are rewarded or need assistance as a result of their overall score, percentile rank in Kentucky and their classification. That's shown in the "Rewards and Assistance Category."

The Kentucky Department of Education notes that a "School or District of Distinction" has a score from the 95th to 99th percentile in the state, meets the student participation rate, and the graduation rate is above 60. Also, the school or district cannot be labeled as "Priority" or "Focus."

Of the five individual schools in the Corbin district, Corbin Elementary School had the highest overall score with a 70.9.

That ranked them with a Percentile Rank of 92, giving them a Distinguished classification, and rewarded as a Highest Performing School.

State Education Department figures say the "Highest Performing School or District" scores are from the 90th to 94th percentile in the state, meets the student participation rate, and the graduation rate is above 60. In addition, it cannot be labeled as "Priority" or "Focus."

→MORE

The state report card said Corbin Middle School did exceptionally well. Their overall score was a 67.7, giving them a Percentile Rank of 94 and a classification of Distinguished. Like the elementary school, Corbin Middle was rewarded as a Highest Performing School.

The high marks continued with Corbin High School's performance. They showed an overall score of 66.5, putting them with a Percentile Rank of 94, and a Distinguished classification. Along with Corbin Middle and Elementary Schools, Corbin High was rewarded as a Highest Performing School.

While its overall score was 63.2, Corbin Intermediate School's Percentile Rank was lower than the other schools in the Corbin district, with a 73. They were also classified as "Proficient."

According to the KDE, a school or district is classified as "Proficient", if their score is in the 70th to 89th percentile in the state.

But Cox said there's a reason for the school's lower percentile rank.

"Even though our grade range for Corbin Intermediate is 5th and 6th Grades, the state put them in the Elementary School category," he pointed out. Cox added Corbin Primary School was not listed in the test scores, because the state did not test the school.

As a district, The Whitley County Schools had an overall score of 55.8, giving them a Kentucky rank of 54, and a "Needs Improvement" classification.

According to the state Department of Education, a school or district "Needs Improvement" if their score is below the 70th percentile in the state.

Whitley County High School's overall score was 51.6, earning them a Kentucky rank of 34, and

was classified with "Needs Improvement", as were all but two other schools in the district.

The exceptions were Whitley County East Elementary School and Whitley Central Intermediate School. Whitley East got a "Distinguished" classification, and a reward of being a Highest Performing School, while Whitley Central Intermediate got a "Proficient" classification.

The Williamsburg Independent Schools as a district had an overall score of 59.2, giving them a Kentucky rank of 78. That classified them as "Proficient." Broken down, the state figures showed Williamsburg's elementary school and high school were classified as "Needs Improvement," while the middle school got a Proficient classification.

District-wide, the Knox County Public School system pulled an overall score of 46.1, giving the district a Kentucky rank of 7, which earned them a "Needs Improvement" classification.

For the district's two high schools, Knox Central High's overall score was 46.8, giving them a Kentucky rank of 16 and classified as Needs Improvement. Knox Central was also recognized in the profile as a "Priority School."

A "Priority" school is a school identified as a Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) school, according to the KDE.

Lynn Camp High School's overall score came in at 43.1, giving them a Kentucky rank of 8, and a "Needs Improvement" classification.

Three schools in the Knox County system — Lynn Camp Middle, Knox County Middle, and Flat Lick Elementary — were recognized in the test results as a "Focus School."

The state Education Department states a "Focus School or District" has a non-duplicated gap group score in the bottom 10 percent of the state, or has an individual group of students scoring significantly low (by this rule, districts cannot be Focus) or has a graduation rate less than 60 for two consecutive years (districts cannot be Focus by this rule).

All other schools in the Knox County district listed in the Kentucky School Report Card were classified as "Needs Improvement."

As a district, the Barbourville Independent Schools had an overall score of 50.8, for a Kentucky rank of 23, and a "Needs Improvement" classification. That classification was also broken down for the district's elementary, middle school and high school.

The Laurel County Schools saw their district-wide overall score come in at 55.8, for a Kentucky rank of 54 and a "Needs Improvement" classification.

Among the district's two high schools, South Laurel High had the higher rank with an overall score of 52.6 and a Kentucky rank of 40, while North Laurel High came in with an overall score of 49.2 and a Kentucky rank

of 22. Both North Laurel and South Laurel High Schools were classified as "Needs Improvement," and both were named as Focus Schools. Both South Laurel Middle School and North Laurel Middle School also got the "Needs Improvement" classification and were both recognized as Focus Schools.

One school in the Laurel County district that did score well was Bush Elementary School. Its overall score of 70.6 and a Kentucky rank of 91 earned Bush Elementary a "Distinguished" classifica-

tion and being rewarded as a "Highest Performing School."

Four Laurel County elementary schools — Camp Ground, Cold Hill, Hunter Hills and Sublimity Elementary — were given the "Proficient" classification. The remaining six elementary schools were classified as "Needs Improvement."

As for the East Bernstadt Independent Schools district in Laurel County, their overall score was 46.5 and a Kentucky rank of 10. As a result they were classified as "Needs Improvement", and recognized as a "Focus District." Both their elementary and middle school also got "Needs Improvement" designation, with East Bernstadt Elementary recognized as a "Focus School."

How did Kentucky's public schools do statewide? As a group, the state average for elementary, middle and high schools came up to an overall score of 55.2.

For elementary schools alone, the score was 57.3. Middle schools alone

scored 53.5, while high schools as a group came with an overall score of 54.8.

The overall score is a calculation using a formula that weights each component. Those five components are Achievement (student achievement on tests), Gap (how achievement varies among different groups of students), Growth (how much student performance improves from one year to the next), College/Career Readiness (how many students hit the targets to achieve the required level of preparation), and Graduation Rate (how many students complete high school).

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MORE

By classification, out of 174 public school districts in Kentucky, 121 districts statewide were classified as "Needs Improvement", while 35 districts were "Proficient" and 18 were "Distinguished."

In the rewards and assistance category, nine school districts in Kentucky were rewarded as a "District of Distinction," while nine districts were rewarded as "Highest Performing District." A total of 17 districts were recognized as a "Focus District."

The new standards come with more rigorous testing, and that came about in 2009 when the state General Assembly in Frankfort passed legislation that mandated new, more thorough academic standards and new state tests. In 2011, Kentucky became the first of 46 states to adopt what's called the Common Core State Standards. Those became the Kentucky Core Academic Standards,

which were incorporated into the state's classrooms, starting with the 2011-12 school year.

In February of this year, the state was granted flexibility under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) by the U. S. Department of Education. As a result, Kentucky's allowed to use the Unbridled Learning model to report both state and federal-level measures for accountability.

This spring, state public school districts completed tests called K-PREP (Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress) in five content areas. Those areas are reading, science, mathematics, writing and social studies. For high school students, four end-of-course exams are included for Algebra II, Biology, English II and Social Studies.

The K-PREP tests are connected to the new, more stringent standards. Cox said the K-PREP replaced the NCLB testing, and as a result, new overall score for schools and districts will be on a scale from 0 to 100. In years past, it had been from 0 to 140.

The Kentucky Department of Education said individual student reports and student performance level definitions have been revised, but the terms remain the same.

More information on the Kentucky School Report Card, including more detailed figures on the individual schools and districts, can be found at the Kentucky Department of Education's website at www.education.ky.gov.